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Housekeepers' Chat

Wednesday, October 15, 1930

Not for Publication

Subject: "Sunlight for Babies." From Children's Bureau, U. S. Dept. of Labor. Menu from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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--ooOoo--

Another day, another dinner. Sometimes I wish that meals grew on trees. Imagine an orchard of Breakfast trees, Dinner trees, and Supper trees. Henry, run out to the orchard and get mother a nice hot lunch for Wednesday, October 15. Don't eat all the dessert before you get back.

Well, since meals do not grow on trees-- at least not meals as they are served -- it's up to us to plan a nice hot lunch for today.

First, though, let me tell you about Mary Anne. Five-year-old Mary Anne was driving through the country with her father when, for the first time in her life, she saw some cat-tails in a swamp. "Oh, Daddy," she cried, shaking his arm. "Look at the hot-dog garden!"

Now we must get down to business. Here's a very very important question, and after that, there's the hot lunch to prepare.

The question is this: "Will you please tell me why children need sunshine? How can sunshine have any effect on the growth of a child?"

The question is this: "Will you please explain something about the disease called rickets, and why sunshine affects the growth of children?"

I shall try to explain it. In the first place, everybody has known, for a long time, that babies need sunshine. That is, everybody has known it, in a general way. But not until recent years have we learned the important effect of sunlight on the growth of children.

Normal growth of bone is dependent not only on the food that the child eats, but also upon the direct sunlight he receives. The sunlight provides the body with the power to use the food. If the baby does not have enough direct sunlight, his bones will not develop normally, his muscles will be flabby and his skin will be pale. He will probably have rickets.

Rickets, which affects about 90 per cent of the babies in the North Temperate zone, is a disease of growth. It affects the whole body, but most strikingly the bones. Mothers who live in hot climates, whose children can be outdoors in the sun the year around, need not worry about rickets. But mothers who live in temperate climates, mothers whose children are indoors a large part of the year, must guard against this disease.

Since rickets is a disease resulting from lack of sunlight, it can be prevented or cured by sunlight. Mothers should begin early to prevent this disease, for it makes its appearance in very young infants. There are two preventive measures for rickets: sun baths, and cod-liver oil, the so-called "bottled sunshine."

As you have heard before, it is the ultra-violet rays of the sun which have such a powerful effect on living matter--which destroy bacteria, real tuberculosis and rickets. And these ultra-violets rays do not pass through ordinary window glass, nor through heavy clothing.

For a long time, mothers believed that babies are delicate, and must be carefully protected from direct sunlight. When a baby was put outdoors, he was carefully bundled up in many clothes and wraps, and the hood of the baby carriage was pulled up, to keep out every ray of sunlight. Even though the baby carriage was placed in the sun, the ultra-violet rays could not penetrate the hood and the clothes, to reach the baby.

Mothers also used to believe that a baby's eyes are weak, and sensitive to light. However, the sun does not cause inflammation, when the baby's eyes are closed, or when his head is turned so that the eyes are not in the direct line of the rays.

Such traditions as these, handed down from generation to generation, are founded more on hearsay than on fact.

Sun baths in the direct sunlight are the simplest method of giving the baby enough ultra-violet light. Of course, in cold parts of the temperate zones extensive outdoor sun baths cannot be given between the middle of November and the middle of March. However, on bright winter days, the baby can be put outdoors to get whatever sunlight there is. Many mothers think that in cold weather a baby may not be put outdoors, not realizing that in the sun the thermometer may register 40 or 50 degrees more than in the shade. If the baby is protected from wind, the sun will keep him warm.

Winter and fall babies need long sun baths, as they are more likely to develop severe rickets than those born in the spring and summer. If the baby is used to indoor sun baths, at an open window he can be started on outdoor ones by the first of March, or even earlier, depending on the climate and the weather.

In the temperate zones, sunlight must be supplemented with cod-liver oil, especially in fall and winter. X-ray studies have shown that either sunlight or cod-liver oil, or better, both together, will cure rickets or prevent it. Even though a baby is born in the spring, and receives sun baths throughout his first summer, he should also be given cod-liver oil. A winter baby can not get enough outdoor sunshine, so he especially needs cod-liver oil.

Should every baby be given cod-liver oil? Yes, Baby specialists say it should be given to every baby throughout the first two years of life, beginning at 2 weeks of age, whether he is breast fed or artificially fed.

If you want more specific information about sun-baths and cod-liver oil, write to me, and I'll send you some literature on the subject.

Now let's plan a hot lunch which will appeal to hungry school children: Crisp Bacon, Spoon Bread; Stewed Tomatoes and Celery. Use the outer stalks of the celery, when you cook the tomatoes and celery together.

Let's see -- we have Crisp Bacon, Spoon Bread, and Stewed Tomatoes and Celery. So far, so good, but not far enough for hungry youngsters. We must have a dessert. How about Baked Apples? O. K. with you? And Oatmeal Drop Cookies. That's a dandy combinations: Baked Apples, and Oatmeal Drop Cookies.

In the Radio Cookbook, on page 50, you'll find the Recipe Lady's directions for the most delicious spoon bread you ever ate. I used this recipe the other day. The spoon bread was rich and delicious in flavor.

In the same Radio Cookbook, on page 11, you'll find directions for Baked Apples, in case you need directions. When you core the apples, be careful not to cut through the blossom end. Place the apples in a baking dish; fill the holes with sugar and butter. Add a few drops of lemon juice for each apple, if you like. Add just enough water to keep the apples from sticking. Of course if the apples are very juicy, they will not need water. Cover the baking dish or pan, and bake in a hot oven, until the apples are soft. Apples cook more quickly in a covered dish, because the steam is held in.

Some apples, such as the Winesap, have more jellying power than others. If cooked long enough, the juice forms a jelly. When apples of this kind are baked through, remove them from the baking dish and concentrate the juice. Add a little more sugar if necessary. Then place the jelly over the baked apples.

Our next recipe is the Oatmeal Drop Cookie. That's on page 73 in the Radio Cookbook. Our Radio Cookbooks certainly come in handy today. I'm glad the recipe for Oatmeal Drop Cookies is in your cookbooks, for it's a long one -- 11 ingredients, counting the raising, nuts, and cinnamon. When the cookies are mixed, drop them by teaspoonfuls onto a greased baking sheet, and bake to a golden brown in a fairly hot oven. Remove from the pan while hot.

Now let's collect our menu: Crisp Bacon; Spoon Bread; Stewed Tomatoes and Celery; Baked Apples; Oatmeal Drop Cookies.

No more menus till Friday. I think there will be a new Sunday dessert on Friday's menu -- something to look forward to.

